

February 15, 2007

The Honorable Larry Gossett
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Gossett:

I am submitting for your approval, an ordinance approving a revision to the King County Code regarding the yearly alteration of voting precincts in King County. K.C.C. 1.12.010 provides for the legislative requirements that govern the process of establishment and revision of voting precincts. Section D. of K.C.C. 1.12.010 requires that, “in balancing precincts, voting precincts shall be constructed so as to consist of between two hundred and four hundred registered voters”.

Washington State law (RCW 29A.16.040) allows for the establishment of voting precincts that may contain as many as nine hundred active registered voters. Further, the current law (RCW 29A.16.040.6) allows for the subtraction of permanent absentee voters, when determining this number.

The proposed plan for King County to transition to a Vote by Mail System will mean that the current permanent absentee voters (607,681) will be added back into voting precincts, resulting in approximately 1000 precincts over the threshold established by the existing county code.

Without a code revision, an annual precinct alteration project would entail approximately 2,400 alterations, creating 1,200 additional voting precincts and a possible addition of 2,000 new ballot styles. A project of this scope would present a very complex challenge for county staff and election administrators and have an enormous impact on the voting populace.

Section E. of K.C.C. 1.12.010 requires a change in language to reflect recent changes in State election law. RCW 29A.04.311 moves the primary election date to the third Tuesday of August. RCW 29A.24.050 establishes the candidate filing period to the first Monday in June of each year. The proposed ministerial change in the code will allow the council adequate time to review and adopt yearly precinct revision legislation.

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If approved, the proposed ordinance will authorize precinct boundary alterations that will result in roughly the same number of voting precincts in King County that exist today and mirror the Washington State criteria for establishing voting precincts.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Ross Baker, Chief of Staff
Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Bob Cowan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Paul Tanaka, County Administrative Officer, Department of Executive Services (DES)

James J. Buck, Interim Director, Records, Elections and Licensing Services, DES